To follow

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/50806153.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	Gen, M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Molly Graham/Will Graham
Characters:	Will Graham, Jack Crawford, Chiyoh (Hannibal), Bedelia Du Maurier, Molly Graham
Additional Tags:	Angst, Heartbreak, Grief/Mourning, POV Will Graham, Memory Palace, Alcohol Abuse/Alcoholism, Season/Series 03, Implied/Referenced Suicide, Pining
Language:	English
Series:	Part 3 of Every world
Stats:	Published: 2023-10-13 Words: 2,909 Chapters: 1/1

To follow

by det395

Summary

A companion piece to the fic *A place you can never go*.

Will Graham and the people he speaks to during his days without Hannibal.

Notes

This won't make much sense without reading the fic it accompanies!

❤️

i.

The first time Will confused his mind for the real world, he was reaching for a bottle of Pilsner that didn't exist.

That wasn't quite true though, was it? Will had been getting reality confused for his entire life. Diagnosed with an active imagination at a young age and a frustratingly distracted one as an adult made that clear enough. A mind that once caught on fire and showed him all kinds of things that weren't compatible with the world as he once knew it. One in which the monsters could be defeated because they were made of all the same elements, in the end.

He stared at the space where his hand had passed through what was not any real, physical object. He tried to look for the tells that indicated he was seeing the real world again, but it all looked the same these days.

One might consider what he was doing strange, contradicting the entire purpose of a fantasy, but this identical room in his memory palace was a familiar room part of a much larger palace. This world was something he and Hannibal shared, imbued with memories both painful and comforting.

It was as close as he wanted to get. It was as far as he could stand to be.

In a moment of haste, he ushered his dogs out the front door and returned inside to fill their dishes. He couldn't be certain what exactly he'd been doing all day. He grabbed a beer from the fridge and focused on the cold condensation against his fingertips. His drinking had at least been real, or else he wouldn't be feeling how he was right now.

He dug his cellphone out from the side of his armchair's cushion. Alana's obligatory check-ins had been decreasing by the day, and how could he blame her when he rarely replied anymore? The recent losses had thrown Will's world into stagnancy. The same ones had allowed Alana's life to begin anew.

It took regular reminders to not search for Jack's name in his list of missed calls. He found Jack in different places these days, usually on the offset of 'one too many' when he couldn't help but recall that fateful night. He took another sip. He was on his mind now.

Will spoke to the empty room. "You know, there was something I suspected back when Bella died," He felt the surety of a presence at his back. "I didn't want you to feel like I was investigating you. It would have been in… bad taste to butt into your head at a time like that, but some things slip through without me wanting to. You'll see why I don't usually attend funerals while they're in session."

Jack waited wordlessly, his expression expectant with that sparkle he had in his eye when he knew what was going to come next.

“It’s just that—I had to wonder if you didn’t take things into your own hands near the end,” Will said.

“You know I can’t confirm that for you, Will, but I think you know well enough,” Jack replied.

“I don’t blame you. Hell, if there’s any worry I have about dying alone, it’s that there’s no one there to pull the plug on me when things get too bad. If one day I drift off into my mind and there’s nothing left….”

He avoided Jack’s reaction by calling the dogs back in. It didn’t prevent him from seeing Jack’s weary gaze at the forefront of his vision. He was in his mind, after all.

“You remember what Bella wanted,” Jack said, wistfully. “It was the least I could do, to grant it a little late. Let her die with as much dignity as she had there. She’d already granted me my time.”

“That time was precious, wasn’t it?” Will asked, turning to face the ghost in his living room.

“The most precious time in my life. At her bedside, we found a piece of Italy we hadn’t been able to find for a long while. And to Italy it all returned.”

“So precious that there was no going on any longer?” Will asked.

His question met silence. He reckoned he’d never get a real answer to that question.

The love of Jack’s life gone. The enemy of Jack’s existence defeated. He hoped it meant some form of peace, whether he knew Chiyoh’s bullet had been waiting for him that day or not.

“I can’t blame you,” he mumbled, mostly to himself, holding the cold can against the left side of his chest. “I really can’t.”

ii.

In his mind, Will hid among the grounds of Castle Lecter.

It was hardly the most comfortable place to linger, but it was the only place he knew for certain he wouldn’t be found. He should have known it was a bad idea to let Hannibal in to the construction of all his new rooms. He supposed he could have made a new space, but what was he going to create? The undecorated square of his office at Quantico? Another ship shoddily constructed like a page out of a Bonnier’s magazine from the 70’s? He was happy enough with his acres of the gothic manor where the sun hadn’t shone once and the fireflies came out at night, the brightest thing of anything there.

It was an incidental product of his own mind that the days passed and the seasons began to change. He was constructing this place in ways that brought life to it. The stones began to show their wear and the flora cracked through tombstones as the state of things caught up to the castle Will had seen with his own two eyes. The only things he did on purpose was fix up Mischa's stone and replace the flowers at its base, the least he could do for letting this place evolve from its past.

To pass the time, he wandered the grounds. After he'd grown bored of the empty, fuzzily bordered landscape, he entered the dark castle and mapped out its halls. It didn't take long to recognize that the exterior was much larger than the interior, compressed by hidden passageways that snaked beyond the walls. Bordered by the same stone as the outside and without a source of light beyond his gas lantern, he felt not unlike he was wandering the catacombs he once let himself get lost in. It was a disheartening déjà vu to be here, rendered alone again by their insurmountable barriers.

Soon he found that, in that darkness, he wasn't entirely alone. He had the sense of being followed for a few days before he turned abruptly enough to catch her in the act.

He understood implicitly that this Chiyoh was merely a ghost of her previous self, young and unblemished by age. Not the person who had once escaped from this castle with him and tried to help him understand things he could not bear. Someone doomed to guard this castle for all of eternity.

He raised his arms in mercy at the sight of her rifle.

"Perhaps you haven't yet realized there's no one here to guard anymore," he said. The last prisoner, irreversibly altered by his influence. Another change wrought upon this place that he could not stop.

She narrowed her eyes at him. "Who you're looking for here… you won't find him."

Will dropped his arms. "I've come to realize that. There's very little of substance here at all."

"Then what exactly are you doing here, if there is nothing more for you to snuff out?"

He half smiled, looking around the cramped space. Chiyoh had felt his influence then. Perhaps she wasn't the only one.

"I thought it might help me to feel closer to him."

"So you come to where he will never return."

"It's safer this way; isn't that part of the reason you made this your post? Isn't it easier to love your adoptive brother from the place he can't make you do anything else?"

Chiyoh observed him warily. He thought he saw her trigger finger twitch, and for a moment he felt his healing shoulder burn anew. Usually it was easier to forget all his lingering body aches this deep in his mind.

"It wasn't ever company I wanted here," she said, and promptly turned to leave.

Perhaps she had a point, he thought, feeling suddenly small in the damp passageway. It was a stifling place for two discarded souls to haunt.

iii.

Will didn't leave the house much these days. It was hard not to feel out of place in the lecture hall, dressed in clothes too constricting and without a drink at hand. More than this physical space, he was out of his element in the real world. He had nothing to hide, but still he did not want Hannibal to know he was here. He kept their memory palace at arm's length, pushed to his periphery just so as to not lose it.

Bedelia du Maurier stepped past her podium, leveling her voice in the pretentious affect of someone too pleased with their own words.

"The devil," she said, *"*My devil, is defeated at last, but if there is anything I want you to take home tonight, it is this: evil like this can be found in the most unsuspecting of places, in those you trust, and in yourself. We cannot live on insensibly, for Hannibal Lecter is not truly dead. Not when his impact lingers on in our world as he lingers in me."

He wiped the sweat off his brow, relieved when people began to file out at last. Will did not. He lingered. He glared none too subtly at anyone who hesitated a bit too long, considering speaking to the captivating lecturer who'd been swallowed whole by the man claimed to be the closest thing to the devil their world had seen, now living no more. After patiently waiting for the lecture hall to empty, he sauntered toward the woman who made him crave so dearly to make something bloody again.

"You might want to get that checked out, if he really is *lingering* in you after all this time," he said, briefly admiring Botticelli's map of hell projected onto the back wall.

Her gentle smile could have convinced the room. "Hello, Will," she said.

"I do wonder what you might have claimed if he was still alive to contradict you. The devilish imagery was a bit on the nose, don't you think?"

"Hannibal was pleased with the construction of a good story."

"You would know, wouldn't you?" It was difficult not to sneer now that she was right in front of him, as placid and untouchable as ever. Not a scar in sight, but he supposed he wouldn't much like to see the *evidence* of how Hannibal lingered on her too.

"I got to know Hannibal better than most in our time together, perhaps only challenged by your insistence." She glanced at him with curiosity that could have mistaken her for a concerned therapist. "Do you miss him?" she asked.

He tried to keep his eyebrows from lifting on his forehead, knowing it would only make him look vulnerable. "His absence is felt in the world," he admitted.

“One usually feels when their chains unlatch. Unless, of course, you keep holding them up yourself.”

“You sure seem eager to keep him latched on. I can only imagine how lucrative it is.” He looked her up and down again. “Without even a scar to show for it.”

If there was anything he could call solely his anymore, when he could no longer say the same for his face or the fleshy make-up of his brain and the unique dance of neurotransmitters inside, there were always the lines colored blushing pink across his body. Jagged collagen reminiscent of the vulnerable flesh exposed, inevitable to fade pale into the specter of what they once were, only hinting at the history that he wouldn’t let fade from his mind any more than the scar on his frontal cranium did. If there was anything to be grateful for, it was Hannibal’s tendency to cut deep enough that they wouldn’t disappear in the lifespan he suspected he had left.

“I was able to maintain a safe distance because he showed me enough of him,” Bedelia said smoothly. “I was there with him, behind the veil. You were… voracious when it came to his company.”

He raised one eyebrow. “I didn’t hold back enough, so I cut myself on him?”

“I do imagine most of your scars exist inside of you, where you tried too hard to keep him down.”

Bedelia gathered her things in a neat pile. “Now just might be the time to don some bandages at last. Or if you really can’t live without getting more of him, you can pick up my book.”

He laughed as she exited the lecture hall, and left for his car still shaking his head, almost giddy despite the ripple of rage under his skin. He slipped inside his memory palace, wanting some respite from the cruel humor of this ruthless world, but found the man he was searching for otherwise preoccupied.

iv.

“Did you hear me, Will?”

He blinked. “I’m sorry?”

“I can add amaretto or peppermint schnapps to the hot cocoa, which would you prefer?” Molly asked him, then her voice raised another notch. “I see you perking up there, none of this for you. It’s the old people special and it’s far too early for you to be growing grays.”

She bopped Wally gently on the nose, making him giggle, and checked the temperature of his mug again.

“Amaretto sounds great,” Will croaked. The drink she passed was still too sweet for his tastes, but he drank it anyway.

Molly’s boy asked quietly if he could go play. She glanced at Will. He smiled warmly and shook his head.

“It’s all right, it was nice to meet you, Wally,” he said, trying not to wince at his own exaggerated politeness. Molly gave a nod and her son toddled out of the room, holding the mug at his mouth with two hands.

It was his first time at Molly’s home, eating her food, drinking her drinks, and bouncing his knee beneath her laminate kitchen table. He was itching to slip inside himself completely but he couldn’t do that to her here.

“He’s a great kid,” he commented in the silence that followed. Her place was warm and lived in, with family photos that let him imagine with startling vividity how it must have looked when it was a bit fuller. At one point, this would have been everything he ever wanted.

“He really is.” She took her seat next to him again, shuffling a bit closer. “He’s handled everything so well, considering. Are you warm, Will? You’re sweating.”

He shook his head as he wiped at his temple. “I tend to do that. It’s fine.”

She frowned, and he was increasingly certain there was something more she wasn’t saying. He knew there was more he wasn’t.

“You were good with him,” she said, then cleared her throat. “Look. I don’t think anyone likes having these conversations. It’s really the least sexy thing ever.”

He smiled despite himself.

“It’s still so early, please know I’m not, like, asking for your hand in marriage here, but you know I’m looking for something more serious here right? My days of casual flings are long behind me. Who I am now, I am always thinking of my family. Of my boy.”

“I know that,” he said, and he did. She made no effort to hide it even beyond Will’s particular perception to these things.

“I just—I can’t help but notice you’re so often checked out on me. I have to wonder if you’re not in this for the same reasons. I wouldn’t judge you for it.”

He was dearly grateful Hannibal was not pushing into his mind at the moment. He would certainly have things to say about this, which wasn’t what Will should have been focusing on now.

He scrambled for words for a moment, guilty that he was even considering the excuses he could use. Molly exuded such understanding, but her eyes widened with something unmistakably sad. He liked Molly; he really, truly liked her. Perhaps she would be kind enough to continue to offer her friendship if he showed her the same kindness.

“I’ve been realizing lately,” he began carefully, wincing at his painful truth. “As much as I really wish I wasn’t, that perhaps I’m not ready to be over another person.”

“Is this… the person that you lost?” she asked. He nodded. He’d been careful not to share any bit of information about his loss. It was solely his to covet.

“I… feel grateful that you thought about having me part of your family. I would have been lucky to be.”

He was not as disturbed as he thought he should have been to recognize one less tether to this life, snipped and pushed to the wayside among all the neat little graves. He had his mind set on one thing and one thing only these days, and that thing called for him with an insistence that he could not ignore. Something that perhaps, he feared, would take his life yet.

Over the table, Molly took his hand in hers.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!